

Capt. Isaac Peterson House  
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail  
Front Street  
Mauricetown  
Cumberland County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1196

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6-MAUR,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CAPT. ISAAC PETERSON HOUSE

HABS No. NJ-1196

Location: Front Street, Mauricetown, Cumberland County, New Jersey

Significance: This colorful Italianate-style dwelling, built across from the Maurice River by a ship's captain, is in excellent condition and reflects the prosperity of the local maritime community.

Description: Built ca. 1870s. This vernacular Italianate wood-frame residence clad with clapboard has a squarish form: three bays wide, two bays deep, two stories tall, topped by a square lantern. The roofs of both are barely hipped or flat (but cannot be seen from ground level); both rooflines have wide eaves and decorative brackets. The first-floor windows on the front facade are six-over-six-over-six-light triple-hung wood sash; fenestration elsewhere is six-over-six-light double hung sash; the lantern contains one glazed bay per facade; these do not appear to be original. Triple- and double-panel louvered shutters flank the window openings (except that of the lantern) respectively. A full, one-story porch has a hipped, flared roof with a bold stripe pattern, upheld by decorative supports. An ornamental cast-iron and wire fence bounds the front of the property; a plate on the gate reads: "Capt. I. Peterson." A tethering post with iron ring is located curbside near the gateway.

History: Prior to the 1880s, when the oyster industry boomed along the riverway, Mauricetown (pronounced Morris-town) was the largest and most active center in Commercial Township. In 1780 Luke Mattox bought land, constructed a landing, and called the area Mattox's Landing. He and others shipped cord wood and lumber from the wharves along the river. In 1814 the Compton brothers bought land here, platted out a town, sold lots and erected houses. By then it was called Mauricetown, due to its riverside location, and as such became the home to several shipyards. One of the first belonged to Joseph W. Vannaman and the captains of ocean-going schooners. The latter dealt some in the oyster trade, though they were more likely to have been associated with shipping lumber and other goods. Between 1870 and 1935, sixty-one vessels were produced here, including regionally popular shallops, sloops, and schooners.<sup>1</sup>

In the mid to late nineteenth century, Mauricetown was known for its population of wealthy sea captains. The grandeur of their Italianate or Gothic Revival-style houses reflects the craftsmanship and lucrativeness of the industry--and the houses remain more often than not virtually intact. The most formal examples parallel the river on Front Street. These include homes occupied by Capt. Mason T. Bowen (1812, 1883), as well as Capt. Samuel Sharp (ca. 1860), Capt. Maurice Godfrey (ca. 1870), and Capt. Charles Sharp (ca. 1860). Today, the collection of dwellings, churches, and a school are uninterrupted by modern intrusions. Mauricetown possibly warrants listing as a National Register of Historic Places district.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Cook Brown, Early Shipbuilding, Particularly in South Jersey (Cumberland County Historical Society, 1961), 10.

Sources:

Brown, Ruth Cook. Early Shipbuilding. Particularly in South Jersey. Cumberland County Historical Society, 1961.

Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991.

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